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October 28, 1985

P-513

Honorable Art Agnos, Chairman
Members, Joint Legislative
Audit Committee
State Capitol, Room 3151
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members:

The State Library complies with state laws and regulations when it microfilms newspapers and card catalogs and appears to be efficient in complying with these laws. Therefore, we believe no further audit work is needed to fulfill our commitment to review the appropriateness of the State Library's conversion of bound volumes to microform.

The State Library has used microfilm to store information for several years. Library officials have implemented procedures for determining what is to be microfilmed and what is to be disposed of or preserved. The library contracts with a microfilm vendor to do most of its microfilming because it does not have adequate staff or facilities to do the job. In addition, the library staff offers newspapers to other libraries or interested parties before it disposes of the newspapers. On two occasions we observed the use of microfilm equipment and found that there were machines available for users. Industry literature indicates that other libraries microfilm their library materials in order to preserve information. In addition, the National Endowment for the Humanities has offered grants to some libraries for the preservation of newspapers and cites microfilming as one method of preserving them. We have discussed the contents of this letter with officials of the State Library, and they agree with our conclusion.

Background

The California State Library, which is part of the Division of Libraries of the State Department of Education, is administered by the State Librarian, who is appointed by the Governor. The goals of the State Library are to make information available to users in a coordinated, effective, and efficient manner and to assist other California public libraries in providing prompt, free library service to state residents. To meet its goal of disseminating information, the library has established a policy of obtaining library materials in microform and converting certain existing library materials, such as

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newspapers and catalogs of library materials (card catalogs), to microform. Microform includes both microfilm (reels of film on which information is stored) and microfiche (four-inch by six-inch sheets of filmed information).

For more than 40 years, the State Library has acquired newspapers in microform or converted newspapers to microform. The library also acquires government publications, periodicals, maps, and catalogs of library materials in microform or converts them to microform. For instance, the State Library houses an historic California newspaper collection of approximately 2,400 titles and currently subscribes to approximately 150 California newspapers, including at least one newspaper from each county. Presently, the library has approximately 80 percent of its entire newspaper collection stored on more than 60,000 reels of microfilm.

The State Library acquires materials in microform when microform costs appreciably less than the original format or when saving space is a consideration. Some microfilmed materials acquired by the State Library are available from commercial vendors. When materials are not available commercially in microform, the State Library contracts with a vendor or uses its own staff to microfilm the materials.

Another reason for microfilming library materials is to preserve information. Since 1870, newspapers and other paper documents have been printed on paper with a high acid content. This paper has a life expectancy of approximately 50 years. The library must transfer the information printed on this paper to microform if it is to avoid losing the information. This problem of the disintegration of library materials is presently being studied by several other libraries and organizations, including the Library of Congress, the University of California, Yale University, Stanford University, and the American Library Association.

Since 1941, the Legislature has appropriated funds to the State Library to microfilm the newspapers the library subscribes to. In 1983, because of the disintegration problem, the Legislature provided additional funds to speed up the microfilming of the library's back files of newspapers. The State Library also receives federal funds to microfilm its back files of newspapers. During fiscal year 1985-86, the State Library received \$116,000 in federal funds for microfilming back files of newspapers; \$6,667 from the General Fund remains in the current contract for microfilming. The library allocated \$51,000 from its fiscal year 1985-86 appropriation for acquiring current newspapers on microfilm or for converting current newspapers to microfilm.

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Scope and Methodology

We reviewed state laws and regulations to determine whether the State Library is acting within its legal limits when it microfilms newspapers and card catalogs. We also reviewed the library's current contract for microfilming to determine the amount of microfilming to be done and the cost of the microfilming. We interviewed State Library officials to determine the reasons for microfilming library materials and the procedures they follow in selecting materials for microfilming, in selecting materials to be saved or disposed of, and in determining how materials are preserved or disposed of.

Our work also included a review of the library's microform materials and equipment available for public use. Finally, we reviewed relevant literature to determine how other libraries use microfilm and computer information sources.

Microfilming Newspapers

The State Library may, according to state law, preserve information for the people of California. The State Library is faced with the problem of preserving newspapers printed on paper that has a life expectancy of approximately 50 years. The State Library has found that microfilming the newspapers is the cheapest and most efficient technology available for preserving the information in the newspapers. Therefore, for more than 40 years, the library has either purchased newspapers on microfilm or contracted to have the original newspapers microfilmed.

Library officials state that they must decide which newspapers to save and which to dispose of. The officials state that they cannot save all of the original newspapers because of space limitations in the library buildings. In addition, as the library collection grows, more space will be needed in the library stacks, where library materials such as books, publications, newspapers, and maps are stored. For example, on our tour of the library, we noted that there is not enough room for some newly acquired additions to the library's collection, and they must be stored on the floor in the stacks until room can be found to properly store them. Also, volumes of a very old California newspaper that the State Library is preserving for historic value are housed in the basement, where damage from water and rodents has occurred.

The State Library's Special Collections Librarian sometimes consults with outside experts and historians to assist him in deciding which newspapers should be preserved. The library preserves all newspapers printed before 1870. It also preserves newspapers with historic value,

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such as early pioneer newspapers and newspapers containing important headlines. For example, the library is preserving all of its bound volumes of the Alta California newspaper because it is recognized by historians as one of the most important nineteenth century pioneer newspapers.

State Library officials also said that they follow certain procedures in microfilming newspapers. Before newspapers are sent to the microfilm vendor, the library officials determine whether the newspaper and its back issues are already available on microfilm. If so, the library will purchase the commercially available microfilm, which costs the library less than microfilming its own copies. Before the newspapers are sent for microfilming, the library's quality control clerk examines them for completeness. If any pages are missing, the library staff works cooperatively with public and university libraries in the State to replace these pages. After the filming has been completed, the quality control clerk checks the microfilm reels on a random basis. If there are any problems with the quality, additional reels are checked, and, if necessary, the film is returned to the vendor for refilming. Once the library staff is satisfied that the information is complete and meets the standards for microfilm established by the American National Standards Institute, the original documents can be disposed of.

The library's first step in the disposal process is to offer the original copies of newspapers free of charge to interested parties, which may include the local public libraries or historical societies. At the State Library's direction, the microfilm vendors may also offer the newspapers to such parties as a public service. If such parties do not want the newspapers, the library instructs the microfilm vendor to destroy the newspapers. The library does not keep all original copies of newspapers since they would not generally be available for public use.

Contracting for Microfilming

Currently, the State Library has a contract with a Palo Alto microfilm vendor to film the newspapers that the library currently subscribes to and to film the library's back file of newspapers. The library now has on microfilm all but approximately 3,300 volumes of old newspapers, some of which are as old as 135 years. If funds are available, the State Library officials expect to finish microfilming the back file of newspapers by the end of fiscal year 1986-87.

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We found that the provisions of the contract and the procedures that the library staff used to award the contract comply with the State Administrative Manual. According to the contract, the total payment for microfilming current newspapers is not to exceed \$20,000 for the three-year period ending June 30, 1986. Filming the back files of newspapers is subject to funds available in any fiscal year. The contract provides for microfilming approximately 320,000 pages of bound and loose newspapers each year, including both current subscriptions and back files. The terms of the contract do not stipulate that the State Library may give the original copies of the newspapers to the vendor in exchange for reduced microfilming costs. The microfilm vendor will, however, dispose of the newspapers for the State Library.

Microfilming Card Catalogs

In response to state law that permits the State Library to preserve and disseminate information, the State Library staff has completed the microfilming of several card catalogs and plans to film all of its 18 card catalogs. The library's procedures for filming the information on the cards is similar to its procedure for filming newspapers, including checks for quality control.

Some of the State Library card catalogs are unique and irreplaceable sources of information collected over many years; however, like the newspapers, the cards are slowly disintegrating. Therefore, the library plans to eventually transfer all of the 18 card catalogs to microform or to machine-readable forms such as computer disk. Library officials state that, by converting the catalogs, they will be able to efficiently provide bibliographic information to users of the State Library throughout California. Eventually the State Library will be able to inexpensively distribute lists of its holdings to all public libraries in the State.

By transferring the information in card catalogs to microform and disposing of the card catalogs, the State Library creates space for other library functions. For example, the library staff disposed of one card catalog, the Union Catalog, after converting it to microfiche. The original Union Catalog was housed in a room that measures 1,800 square feet; the catalog is now stored in one microfiche drawer, which holds 1,943 four-inch by six-inch microfiche sheets. Despite the great reduction in storage requirements, library officials believe that there is an information loss of from one to no more than 5 percent in converting documents to microform.

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Another method that libraries are using to preserve the information on card catalogs is to store it on computers. For example, the University of California recently computerized one of its card catalogs. Staff time and money that previously went into the production, sorting, filing, and revising of the card file are now used for other library priorities. The library will keep the cards for six months. If no problems arise, the cards will be discarded. The University of California Library also eliminated its map room dictionary catalog when all of its book and journal records were converted to computerized form.

Use of Microform Equipment

The State Library provides a variety of microform equipment to serve the public. The areas in the main library with materials on microform are the California Section, the Law Library, the State Information and Reference Center, the Government Publications Section, and the Circulation Section and General Catalog room. Each of the rooms has card catalogs on microfiche or publications on microform or both. In addition, there is information on microform in the State Library's Braille and Talking Book Library, its capitol branch, and the Sutro Library in San Francisco. The types of equipment available for public use include readers and reader/printers for both microfiche and microfilm.

On two occasions, we observed the use of the microform equipment by the public. We found that even though there were some microfilm readers and reader/printers that were not working, not all of the available machines were being used. During the second observation, we noted that some of the previously nonworking machines had been repaired and were being used. Library officials stated that they order new machines each fiscal year to replace old or worn equipment if there are sufficient funds in the budget. An inventory of the State Library's microform equipment is provided in the attachment to this letter.

Conclusion

The State Library is following state laws and regulations in planning and carrying out its microfilming of library materials. The library is in the third year of a contract to microfilm current and back files of newspapers. The contract payment for microfilming newspapers does not exceed \$20,000 for a three-year contract; the number of old newspapers filmed depends on funds available in any fiscal year. On two occasions we observed the use of microform machines in the library and found that not all of the available machines were being used. The library adds

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microform equipment as funds are available to replace outdated or nonworking machines. Finally, other libraries are using microfilming as one method to preserve library materials.

Sincerely,



The signature is handwritten in black ink. It appears to read "Thomas W. Hayes".

THOMAS W. HAYES
Auditor General

Attachment

cc: Honorable Lloyd G. Connelly
Assemblyman, 6th District

ATTACHMENT

**CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY
MICROFORM EQUIPMENT FOR PUBLIC USE***

<u>Location</u>	<u>Microfiche Readers</u>	<u>Microfilm Readers</u>	<u>Microfiche Reader/Printers</u>	<u>Microfilm Reader/Printers</u>
California State Library, Main Branch				
California Section	2			
Microfilm Reading Room	3	12	1	4
Government Publications Section	6		1	1
State Information and Reference Center	4		2	1
Law Library	1		2	
Circulation Section and General Catalog	2			
Braille and Talking Book Library, Sacramento			1	
Sutro Library, San Francisco	4	5	1	1

*This inventory does not include items used exclusively by staff in various workrooms and offices. This inventory is unaudited.

Source: California State Library